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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 001441

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [KPAL](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: HAMAS LEGISLATORS IN JORDAN FOR ARAB PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE

REF: A. AMMAN 1364

[1](#)B. AMMAN 1177

[1](#)C. AMMAN 1175

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Hamas PLC members Mahmoud al-Zahar and Saeed Syam, in Jordan to attend an Arab parliamentary conference, called in local press for "close relations" between Jordan and a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority. They met with local Islamists and MPs, but did not have contact with GOJ officials. GOJ spokesman Nasser Judeh announced that Zahar and Syam were in Jordan in their capacity as legislators - not as Hamas representatives - and that the government had no plans to meet with Hamas. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) Two prominent Hamas members recently elected to the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), Mahmoud al-Zahar and Saeed Syam, arrived in Jordan on February 25 to attend the 12th biannual conference of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU) at the Dead Sea. The two-day conference, which officially started on February 27, includes 22 delegations and is being held under the patronage of King Abdullah.

[1](#)3. (U) Soon after their arrival, Zahar and Syam held a meeting in Amman with Jordanian MPs from the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the political arm of Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood. In an interview with leading Jordanian daily Al-Ra'i, Zahar stated that he and Syam outlined their experiences from the Palestinian legislative elections for the IAF MPs, as well as details on the Hamas electoral win and current negotiations to form a new Hamas-led Palestinian government. Zahar stressed in his interview that Hamas was "eager" to have "close relations" with Jordan, particularly since Jordan was one of only two "gateways" from the Palestinian territories to the Arab world. IAF MP Azzam Al-Huneidi (West Banker, Amman) told the press that Zahar did not ask the IAF to convey any message to the GOJ. Huneidi added, however, that the IAF would continue its efforts to use public opinion and the media to bring about a rapprochement between the Government of Jordan and Hamas.

[1](#)4. (U) In addition to his interview with Al-Ra'i, Zahar talked with major independent Arabic daily Al-Ghad on February 25. Regarding Jordan, Zahar said that Hamas valued highly its relations with Jordan, and was ready to meet with GOJ officials without any preconditions. He continued that Hamas wanted to express to the GOJ "our clear stand, namely not to close Jordan's door to us." Zahar noted that he had not attempted to initiate any contacts with GOJ officials, and that there were "no new developments" concerning a proposed visit by a Hamas delegation to Jordan.

[1](#)5. (C) The Speaker of Jordan's Chamber of Deputies, Abdul Hadi Majali, and seven other Jordanian MPs met with Zahar and Syam on the evening of February 26. According to the press, the two Hamas legislators repeated their desire for close relations between the Palestinian Authority and Jordan, and highlighted the importance of Jordanian-Palestinian economic cooperation. Contacts in parliament told poloff that that Majali made no promises to help Hamas establish formal relations with the GOJ.

[1](#)6. (C) Jordanian MPs at the AIPU conference informed poloff that the Hamas delegation is so far playing a "low key" role. MP Suleiman Abu Ghaith (West Banker, Madaba) told poloff that Zahar has acted "politely" and has not tried to stir up any controversy. Abu Ghaith added that Zahar and Syam had been given a "warm reception" by most conference participants.

[1](#)7. (C) Government spokesman Nasser Judeh stated publicly on February 27 that Zahar and Syam were in Jordan in their capacity as members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, and not as Hamas representatives. He added that the GOJ did not have plans to meet with Hamas, and that the government had not received any official request from Hamas leaders to visit Jordan. Judeh told Ambassador February 27 that the GOJ was miffed at the role of Jordanian Islamist MPs in arranging meetings for the Hamas legislators with members of the Jordanian parliament. On February 28, FM Al-Khatib privately seconded Judeh's comments. Khatib told Ambassador that in response to Palestinian calls for GOJ-Hamas meetings, the GOJ would remind Palestinians that the PA has an Embassy in Amman, and any outstanding official business could be

conducted through that channel.

18. (C) COMMENT: The visit of Zahar and Syam to Jordan for the AIPU conference has tongues wagging around Amman. Jordanians supportive of Hamas, including those within the Islamist movement (refs B, C), have welcomed their presence and their overtures to Jordan in the local press. Those who warn that the Hamas electoral victory may encourage Islamic radicals here (ref A), on the other hand, have looked on with suspicion, particularly at Zahar's meeting with the IAF to discuss electoral and campaign issues. At this point, it is clear that the GOJ is taking a very wary approach to Hamas, and to the Hamas victory's potential impact on Jordan's internal dynamics. END COMMENT.
HALE